

## Government Reform

It's no secret that America's faith in its government has been declining. The 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections were both closely contested and concerns were raised that votes were not counted properly and that other deceptive practices were employed to influence their outcomes.

In addition, a growing level of corruption and unethical behavior in Washington has diminished the public trust. The ethical abuses revealed go beyond a few isolated instances of government officials misusing their offices to benefit themselves, their political agenda or their allies. The corruption emanates from the highest levels of leadership in Congress and the Administration, with individuals either indicted or admitting to the abuse of their office. Ultimately, the American public is the victim of these ethical lapses.

The halls of Congress have also suffered with limited, and oftentimes non-existent debate, a disregard for standard House procedures and a complete silencing of the minority's voice.

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### Election Reform

Every election for every public office is important. With more elections being decided by smaller margins, voters need assurances that our voting systems are accurate and not subject to outside influence or manipulation.

Both the 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections were decided by extremely small margins and in both, significant questions were raised regarding the integrity and accuracy of our election process.

The wavering confidence in our election process is not something to be taken lightly - elections are the oxygen of our democracy. Congresswoman Eshoo is committed to do everything she can in Congress to improve our election process to ensure the utmost integrity in our elections.

In response to the 2000 Presidential election, Rep. Eshoo was proud to cosponsor the Help America Vote Act, which was enacted in 2002. This law created the Federal Election Assistance Commission to assist states in dealing with the administrative duties related to elections, authorized funding to assist states in replacing outdated voting equipment and created federal minimum standards for conducting elections.

Since then, Rep. Eshoo has cosponsored H.R. 550, the Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act. This legislation requires a voter-verified paper ballot for electronic voting machines to allow voters to see the ballot they are casting and provide a record for a manual recount should one be required. H.R. 550 would also require random, unannounced, hand-count audits of the voter-verified paper records in two percent of all jurisdictions, including at least one precinct per county.

Rep. Eshoo is also a cosponsor of H.R. 834, the Federal Election Integrity Act of 2005. This legislation addresses concerns raised about top state election officials participating in campaign activities, as we saw in both the 2000 election in Florida and the 2004 election in Ohio. H.R. 834 would make it unlawful for a state's chief election official to actively campaign for federal candidates, thereby removing a cloud over the motives of state officials in decisions regarding the election process.

Finally, Rep. Eshoo is also a cosponsor of H.R. 4463, the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act. This legislation establishes harsh penalties for knowingly deceiving any person regarding the time, place or manner of conducting federal elections. It also requires the Attorney General, in cooperation with the Federal Communication Commission and the Election Assistance Commission, to study the feasibility of using public service announcements, the emergency alert system and other forms of public broadcast to provide correct voting information.

All of these bills are aimed at improving our election process and ensuring the utmost accuracy and integrity in our elections.

#### Additional Resources:

For additional information about registering to vote, voting with an absentee ballot or other election and voting issues you can visit the California Secretary of State's website or call (916) 653-6814. You can also contact your individual county election offices using the information below:

#### San Mateo County

40 Tower Road

San Mateo, CA 94402

Phone: (650) 312-5222

Email: [registrar@smcare.org](mailto:registrar@smcare.org)

Website: [www.shapethefuture.org/](http://www.shapethefuture.org/)

## Santa Clara County

1555 Berger Drive, Building 2

San Jose, CA 95112

(408) 299-VOTE

E-mail: [registrar@rov.sccgov.org](mailto:registrar@rov.sccgov.org)

Website: <http://www.sccvote.org>

## Santa Cruz County

701 Ocean Street, Room 210

Santa Cruz, CA 95060-4076

(831) 454-2060

E-Mail: [gail.pellerin@co.santa-cruz.ca.us](mailto:gail.pellerin@co.santa-cruz.ca.us)

Website: [www.votescount.com](http://www.votescount.com)

## Lobbying

A report by PoliticalMoneyLine, a non-partisan organization that provides campaign and lobbying information, found that spending on federal lobbying exceeded the \$2 billion mark in 2004, a seven percent increase over the previous year. This continuous increase in the amount of money spent lobbying Members of Congress demonstrates the need to continue to monitor the relationships between Members of Congress and lobbyists in order to preserve the integrity of Congress and maintain the public's trust, and Congresswoman Eshoo has cosponsored several bills aimed at doing just that.

Rep. Eshoo is a cosponsor of H.R. 2412, the Special Interest Lobbying and Ethics Accountability Act of 2005. This legislation amends the Lobbying Disclosure Act to require more transparency and accountability. Among its provisions, the bill enhances lobbying disclosure and gives the American people access to more complete and timely information about the people who lobby their representatives. It also curbs excesses in congressional travel, ends lobbyist-organized junkets, and strengthens enforcement and oversight of ethics and lobbying rules. H.R. 2412 has been referred to the House Ethics, Judiciary and Rules Committees.

## Additional resources:

- Political Moneyline - [www.fecinfo.com](http://www.fecinfo.com)

- Follow the Money - [www.followthemoney.org](http://www.followthemoney.org)

## Ethics/Lobbying Reform

On May 3rd, 2006 the House voted to approve H.R. 4975, the Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act, by a vote of 217-213. Rep. Eshoo opposed this legislation because it did not go far enough to provide adequate reform to a House desperately needing it.

Noticeably absent from the bill put forward by the House Leadership were provisions to reform the procedural abuses that have silenced debate, prohibited Members from seeing legislation before it's voted on, and allowed leadership to hold votes open in order to manipulate Members' votes. H.R. 4975 also delays a permanent ban on privately-funded travel and gifts to Members from lobbyists until after the November election.

Rep. Eshoo is an original cosponsor of H.R. 4682, the Honest Government, Open Leadership Act, which would return a fair and open legislative process to the House of Representatives by providing a minimum time for Members to review legislation prior to a vote and by requiring full and open debate in conference committees. This proposal also provides increased disclosure by lobbyists and permanently bans travel, gifts, and meals from registered lobbyists to Members of Congress.

The Honest Government, Open Leadership Act was offered as an alternative to H.R. 4975 but was defeated by a vote of 213 to 216.

## Additional resources:

- Side by side comparison of House Republican and House Democratic reform packages.